

**Working with The Department of Housing and Urban Development
and the
White House Faith-based and Community Initiative Offices**

Testimony from:
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June 14, 2005

Testimony for:
Subcommittee on Federalism and the Census
Committee on Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives

Introduction

Congressman Turner, thank you for inviting World Vision to testify before your committee today. My name is Mark Howard. I serve as the General Counsel for World Vision and have been in this role for the past 15 years.

World Vision is Christian relief and development organization operating in nearly 100 countries with an overall budget of about \$1.5 billion. In 2004, World Vision US contributed \$800 million to this total of which \$285 million came from the U.S. Government and the rest through the private sector. World Vision has over 1 million private donors from every State and Congressional District in the United States

Motivated by our faith in Jesus, World Vision serves the poor -- regardless of a person's religion, race, ethnicity, or gender -- as a demonstration of God's unconditional love for all people.

Within the United States, World Vision works in collaboration with thousands of local faith and community-based organizations. In 2004, World Vision assisted more than 1.5 million American children and adults. And here in Washington DC, World Vision is working with at risk youth on the streets and in the schools in Wards 7, 8 and Prince George's County. World Vision is working on a cutting edge program in Northern Virginia to break the vicious cycle of gang violence.

Finally, World Vision is the largest non-commercial provider of school supplies both here in Washington, DC and across the nation through our gifts-in-kind program.

Grant Portfolio

While the majority of World Vision's grants from the US Government are for international programs, we have been increasing our domestic programs with both private and public resources. For example, the domestic portfolio currently includes funding from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Department of Justice (DOJ), the DC Appropriations bill, and the Department of Housing Urban Development (HUD). As this hearing is specifically on the faith-based programs through HUD, World Vision has applied for and won two HUD Rural Capacity Building grants for a combined total of \$600,000 to be dispersed over 5 years.¹

¹ The first grant was a 2 year cycle and World Vision is currently finalizing the close out procedures, the second grant began this year and will be in effect for up to 36 months.

World Vision Domestic Programs

The Storehouse initiative maintains an expanding network of warehouses stocked by gifts-in-kind donations, which provide everything from school and building supplies to personal care items for communities and families in need. In FY 2004, corporate partners donated approximately \$32 million in materials and supplies to support World Vision's 7,716 faith-based and community partners, who distributed them to families in need.²

The *Vision Youth* initiative is a community-based project designed to provide youth, ages 5 to 18, with the tools needed to make productive life choices and lead fulfilling lives. Currently, these mentors are impacting the lives of 4,274 young people in eight regions of the United States.³

Tools for Transformation is a comprehensive training and technical assistance program, which builds the capacity of local faith and community-based organizations. To date, more than 1,800 faith-based and community organizations have benefited from Tools for Transformation nationwide.⁴

The Faith-based Initiative

World Vision would like to thank President Bush and the U.S. Congress for its support of the many faith-based and community initiatives. These numerous efforts have begun to reduce the barriers with the goal of bringing a level playing field for all organizations – faith-based and secular. However, for World Vision, the reforms have not gone far enough. Although we are welcomed to participate and apply for all programs, in many cases the price of participation – especially on U.S. domestic programs -- is too high. We are asked to forfeit our religious hiring requirement, which we refuse to do. Therefore, we do not apply for the grant.

Religious staffing is essential to the character of our organization and is protected by the Title VII exemption of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. World Vision serves the world's poor regardless of a person's religion, race, ethnicity, or gender. We understand and respect the cultures in which we work, and we do not proselytize.

Some of the programs World Vision and other faith-based organizations are being invited to participate in do not honor this precious religious staffing freedom. The Youthbuild and Youth Offender Re-entry opportunities are two such programs. Both of these programs carry Workforce Investment Act (WIA) stipulations that roll in at the localized level. In addition each program is from an agency World Vision has accepted funds from in the past. The language is so onerous World Vision is precluded from submitting a proposal.

² Partially funded by HUD grants

³ Partially funded by DOJ and DOED grants

⁴ Partially funded by DOJ grants

The specific language which deterred World Vision from submitting a proposal is found in 70 Fed. Reg. 13980- (2005), III. Eligibility Information, C. Other, 3. Program Requirements, f. "Participation in Local Workforce Investment Act (WIA) One-Stop Center. Youthbuild grantees are mandatory partners in one-stop centers authorized by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-220)."

Section 188 (a), (2) of the WIA prohibits organizations from hiring employees based on religion. While this funding comes directly from HUD, the fact that any Youthbuild grantee would be a mandatory partner in a One-Stop Center pulls over the requirement and prevents World Vision from accessing such funding. Since World Vision would need to be a "mandatory partner" as a grantee, and not just on the list as a resource to beneficiaries outside of the One-Stop system, World Vision would not be eligible under the program requirements, since World Vision would not forgo our ability to hire based on religion.⁵

World Vision's ability to engage in a timely conversation with the Faith-Based Offices was essential. The knowledgeable second opinion was necessary to make the appropriate decision for World Vision, which in these cases was not to submit a proposal. The Faith-Based offices assisted in detailed fact checking of our internal legal review. The Faith-Based Offices are aware of these issues and World Vision hopes Congress will change these statutory restrictions to conform to the Title VII exemption of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

Recommendations

World Vision would request further reforms in particular; to eliminate the restriction on religious staffing in Workforce Investment Act. This would enable the welcome, which Congress and the Administration had hoped for, to in fact become more welcoming.

World Vision strongly supports H.R. 1054. Not only should the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives be codified, but also expanded so that organizations, particularly those without the resources and staff of World Vision can get the guidance and assistance they need.

Conclusion

World Vision believes that religious staffing is essential to the religious integrity and autonomy of our organization. The White House Faith-Based and Community Initiative Offices' have played an integral role over the past few years in educating and advising grassroots, faith-based and community organizations. Although the playing field is far from level, the ability to access these Office's ensures issues of concern to organizations like World Vision receive the attention they deserve.

I would be glad to entertain any questions you have for World Vision. Thank you again for allowing me to testify.

⁵ It is important to note these same issues exist in other funding streams such as the Youth Offender Reentry out of the Department of Labor and AmeriCorps out of the Corporation for National and Community Service.